

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

By Matt Ottey

I've lived in Huddersfield for almost three years now, and at the tender age of 21 I'm ashamed to say I've never ventured into West Yorkshire's countryside. I'm a city boy, and with my upbringing being the way it was I've grown accustomed to tarmac not grass, houses not cottages, and to car parks instead of fields.

Yet as I sat on the bus travelling to Scissett, something unexpected happened. No, we didn't break down, I actually found myself growing more intrigued with the beautiful countryside as the bus delved deeper into the valleys. What's more, instead of casually ignoring this picturesque landscape in favour of staring idly at the back of someone's head, I began noticing the way in which people of West Yorkshire live.



As the bus drew into the busy little village of Scissett, all I knew was that Nortonthorpe's ground was on a hill. All I had to find out was which one. I began wandering down the main street, stopping people right, left and centre asking for directions. I'm pretty sure at least ten people crossed the street just to avoid me.

Several hundred metres down the road I passed Nortonthorpe Hall School, so called because it now stands where the hall used to, yet it has managed to incorporate part of the remaining building work into its premises.

On the hill, clearly visible from most parts of Scissett, stands Bagdon Hall, the home of the Norton family. On closer inspection, the premises are a beautiful blend of old fashioned masonry and newly added and restored buildings.

As I made my way in what I was reliably informed was the 'right direction', I stopped to ask someone where the ground was. He replied in a strong yet welcoming accent: "You're looking at it". As I swivelled round I saw a pretty steep hill with a building at the summit. He went on: "If you follow this road, just past this here hedge, there's a little snicky. It'll take you right up to it".

In three minutes I was at the top, looking across the outfield of the cricket pitch. I was now wearing brown trainers in stead of white, however. This is what happens when city boys go to the countryside!

I sat, perched on an empty beer barrel, under cover of the smoking area, accompanied by the trickle of water falling from the clubhouse, and the clear, chirpy sound of birdsong. The beauty of the spot became instantly apparent, even in the cold, wind, wet and mist of January.

Away to my right, the singular brick structure of the scoreboard stood backed up to the tree-line of the embankment. I can only begin to imagine how picturesque the ground looks when occupied by players and framed by the striking surrounding landscape.

Equally as enjoyable I'm told is the intoxicating combination of sun, sport and scenery during the summer months. An experience I'm yet to enjoy but, with a bit of luck, I will at some point in the near future.